division of the land according to the "well-field" *(ching t'ien)* system (to be described a few pages below), to have invented carts drawn by oxen, to have devised several musical instruments, and in many other ways to have advanced civilization. His principal spouse is credited with having taught the people sericulture, so important to the later life of China.

After a number of other rulers is said to have come Yao, a model Emperor, who, in naming his successor, passed over his own son as incompetent and appointed Shun, whom he had selected for his skill and integrity and whom he had tested in various ways. Shun is reported to have performed sacrifices of several kinds, to have introduced uniformity into measures of length, capacity, and weight, to have travelled widely, to have subdued some of the barbarian tribes, to have divided the Empire into twelve provinces, and to have regulated some of the watercourses. Shun, so it is said, like Yao, went outside his family and chose as his successor Yii, who had drained the waters of a great flood which had afflicted the country in the days of Yao. Shun and Yii each is reported to have reigned for a time conjointly with his predecessor and then, the latter abdicating, alone. Yii is said to have made the crown hereditary in his family and to have founded the first dynasty, that of Hsia. This dynasty, the names of whose rulers tradition essays to give, is reported to have come to an end through the excesses of its last ruler, Chieh, who, falling under the spell of a beautiful but depraved woman, engaged in debauchery and cruelty. An outraged country was at last, so the story goes, led in rebellion against him by T'ang, who, defeating and exiling the tyrant, founded the second dynasty, that of Shang or Yin—Shang being the name by which

the members of the ruling house called themselves, and Yin the title by which the dynasty was denominated by the one which succeeded it.

As has been said, it is very uncertain whether these figures have actual history back of them. Some are probably entirely mythical, the creations of folk-lore and of uncritical writers in the attempt to account for the origin of the world and the beginnings of civilization. Some may be heroes or gods taken over from other peoples when they were conquered and assimilated by the Chinese. We are made suspicious by the effort to associate five of the pre-Hsia rulers—the Five Sovereigns *(Wu Ti)*—with the five elements of traditional Chinese physics—earth, wood, metal, fire,